

Caregiver Connection

April 2009

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers



Current
economy
means putting
available resources
into direct services
for children

Children's Administration recognizes the value in conferences that educate substitute caregivers and Tribal partners. We all agree these events are important in terms of education and networking.

Unfortunately, the current economy requires all of us to look at how we can best preserve vital services for our most vulnerable children and that means eliminating other, often very valued services and events. With our primary commitment to child safety and well-being in mind, the Children's Administration (CA) is suspending all conferences for 2009, except the Children's Justice Conference which is federally funded. We are all very disappointed the Indian Child Welfare Summit and the Foster Parent and Caregiver Conference will not take place in 2009. Our decision to suspend these conferences was difficult and not taken lightly.

While we are unable to conduct these conferences this year, we are looking at alternative ways to bring CA staff, tribal staff, child welfare staff, foster parents, and caregivers together to support one another and to receive vital training. One place where everyone interested in services for children and families can gain vital information is the Children's Justice Conference which will be held April 6th and 7th at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle, Washington. More information about this nationally respected conference may be found at www.dshscjc.com.

We maintain the safety of children as our number one goal. We appreciate your understanding and value your commitment to some of our most vulnerable children and families of Washington State.

If you have any questions please contact Michael Luque, MSW Program Manager 360-902-7986 lumi300@dshs.wa.gov.

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LEFT TO RIGHT: Lamar, Tess, Allen
(seated on floor), Doug, Nathan

Photo by Michael Luque

TELL US YOUR FAMILY STORY

The feature families you are meeting are your neighbors and community members. Just like you, they are making a difference in the lives of children throughout Washington State. If you are a foster parent, guardian or relative caregiver and would like to share your story, please contact Michael Luque 360-902-7986 or email lumi300@dshs.wa.gov.

Meet Tess Thomas

Tess Thomas was a musician who opened shows for James Brown, BB King, Della Reese, and Tiny Tim to mention a few. Before becoming a foster parent over 17 years ago, Tess was in the process of submitting her impressive music portfolio to an agent who was arranging for Tess to perform in Las Vegas.

As Tess waited for the call to perform in Las Vegas, another stage was being set and it would change her life and the lives of the youth for whom she cares. A friend asked Tess to attend foster parent Scope training in Seattle – It was a life changing event for Tess, who was so moved by the stories of children in care that she abandoned her musical aspirations and became a foster parent. Tess states “she has no regrets about changing careers”. Tess has one birth son, Michael, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Tess is currently fostering five young men, all of whom are considered “at-risk youth.”

Tess and her fiancé Doug Anderson are licensed together. He is a significant source of support to Tess, the kids and the Thomas House. She tells her foster kids they are at the “Thomas House and will always be a Thomas kid.” She believes it is important for youth who come from difficult circumstances “to know they are loved” and to have a “forever family” to return to. Thomas “kids” do return years later, often with their own families to the

“Thomas House.” When the boys are not busy with school, Tess has them involved in many activities such as going to movies, theatre, art museums, and children’s fun centers. Tess states “when she can impact a life in a positive way and can see that impact transform and move forward in a positive way, the long-term rewards outweigh the daily challenges.”

Recently, Tess had the opportunity to advocate for children and families on the big stage – Washington D.C. The purpose of her trip was to introduce Senator McDermott to over 200 other senators, congressman, and national leaders and to address H.R. 6893: Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. Tess’s speech primarily focused on youth aging out of foster care and the significance of Independent Living Services and education for these struggling youth. Tess emphasized that education is one of the core elements of Fostering Connections legislation.

Tess believes that “education is the only way out” for the high risk youth she serves, stating “education is a new branch to replace a broken one” Foster parents are mortar in the foundation, education is the foundation to help youth close the gap and find their success into adulthood.

You can too.

We are family – A night with the Mariners

Join the Seattle Mariners in celebrating the children and families of adoption, foster care, and relative care and the many extended family members, social workers and community members who support them.



Bring your family and friends to Safeco Field and watch the Mariners take on the Oakland Athletics in some exciting Major League Baseball action and help celebrate this special night.

View reserved seats are \$11.00 (normally \$20.00) for all families and friends. As a bonus, if you purchase tickets through this offer, you will be eligible to receive a specially designed Mariners, We Are Family baseball hat.

Baseball hats should be picked up outside of section 321 before the 4th inning

When: Friday, May 1, 2009 beginning at 7:10 p.m.

Where: Safeco Field

Who: All adoptive, foster, relative caregivers, social workers, and the community members (agencies) that support them.

To purchase tickets for this event just visit the webpage: www.mariners.com/WeAreFamily and enter the password – WeAreFamily to purchase your ticket(s). Once online you can select your seat(s) and print tickets at the same time. If you do not have internet access and want to order tickets or want more information about this great opportunity please contact Corinne Fowler at 206-346-4515 or email cfowler@mariners.com or contact Michael Luque, MSW Foster Care & Kinship Care Program Manager.



National Foster Care Month You Can **DO** Change a Lifetime

All children deserve a safe, happy life – including the 510,000 American children and youth in foster care. Young people in foster care, especially need nurturing adults on their side because their own families are in crisis and unable to care for them.

Across the country, people just like you are helping young people in foster care build brighter futures by serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers. But much more help is needed. Most communities are urgently seeking more everyday people to come forward to help our most vulnerable children realize their full potential.

Each May, we salute the compassionate people who make a difference by serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers, and volunteers. Thanks to these unsung heroes, many formerly abused or neglected children and teens will either safely reunite with their parents, be cared for by relatives, or be adopted by loving families, National Foster Care Month – Change a Lifetime.

To participate in a Foster Care Month event in your area please contact your local Children's Administration office or contact your Regional Foster Parent Representatives or go to www.fostercaremonth.org.

Free Cakes for Kids

Special cakes for the greatest kids – Cakes for Kids believes every child deserves a birthday cake!

Free cakes for kids is a diverse group of women, consisting of career women, stay-at-home parent(s), grandmothers and aunts, that have come together with a heart-felt desire and common goal, (not to mention a passion for baking), to bring joy and cake to children on their birthday.

Free cake for kids is based on the belief that every child deserves a special birthday cake!

"When families are severely stressed financially, sometimes it is a choice between a birthday gift or birthday cake." While Free Cakes for Kids does not charge for their cakes, they will always accept donations.

To order a free cake please go to www.freecakesforkidssouthsound.com and to provide donations, or to become a volunteer please contact Mischell Devine-Nunner 253-267-5686, freecakesforkidssouthsound@yahoo.com.

Post Adoption **Support**

Did You Know?

We would love hearing about your experience of becoming a parent through adoption and sharing it with other parents. If you would like to become a "feature family" in our section of this publication, please send your story to Lonnie Locke at Adoption Support, P.O. Box 45713, Olympia 98504 or e-mail at lolo300@dshs.wa.gov

Book Nook

BOOK TITLE

The Jonathon Letters: One family's use of support as they took in, and fell in love with, a troubled child

AUTHOR

Trout, Michael and Thomas, Lori

PUBLICATION YEAR

2005

ABSTRACT

A collection of e-mails with a foster/adoptive mother and a specialist in attachment. Topics ranged from expressions of frustration to reports of progress. The letters illustrate positive parenting approaches and the importance of hope.

If you have any books you would recommend for adoptive parents, please contact Lonnie Locke by e-mail at lolo300@dshs.wa.gov or call (800) 562-5682. The name of the book, content summary, and author would be helpful.

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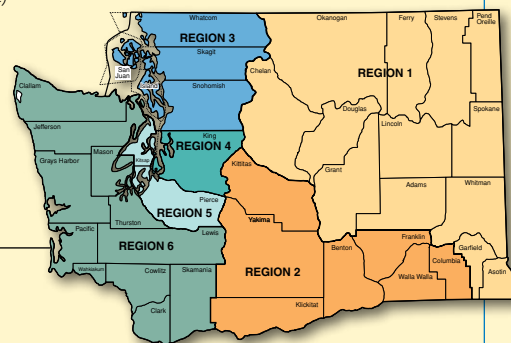
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Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants

Early screening and intervention are critical in helping children with disabilities

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) are a part of every state's required Medicaid package. This tool for assessing a child's overall development and well-being can be a very powerful tool in assisting healthy children and in providing critical information very early on about children living with developmental and other disabilities. Research shows that early diagnosis is a key factor in future quality of life for children with disabilities. Assessment is also necessary in helping these kids and their families access the important services and resources. Don't pass up this opportunity and requirement for your child.

If you have questions about EPSDT for your child please contact Michelle Bogart, Foster Care Health Program Manager (360) 902-8006 or email gogm300@dshs.wa.gov.

Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County, call 206-605-0664 and in any county from Snohomish County north, call 360-510-7601 or 360-863-6530.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve
<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Training hours available!

If you are a licensed caregiver who has depended on the Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Summit or Caregiver Conference for your licensing requirement education hours, now is the time to begin planning for alternatives. Children's Administration offers a full array of education and training to improve skills and meet licensing requirements across the state. Please contact your Resource Family Training Institute trainer or go to <http://ca.dshs.wa.gov/intranet/> for more information about training opportunities in your area.

Upcoming events in 2009

Foster Parents – take the opportunity to be heard!

Contact your regional foster parent representatives to find out about March's regional meetings and statewide meeting which will be held on April 8, 2009, Tacoma DCFS office 1949 South State Street from 1:00 to 4:00 Room 195!

Enhancing relationships through teaming

Join us for an exciting day of discussion designed to support, promote, and strengthen the relationship between Foster and Relative Caregivers and Children's Administration staff. The workshops will explore:

- Common teaming challenges and successful strategies
- Skills and resources that support teaming efforts
- Practical ways to enhance your working relationships
- What it's like to be in your partner's shoes.

Who can participate? Foster parents, relative caregivers, and social workers. This training is mandatory for social workers and a must for everyone that works with children in the child welfare system.

Region 1 – June 2, 2009
Wenatchee DCFS Office

Region 2 – June 4, 2009
Ellensburg DSFS Office

Region 3 – April 29, 2009
Smokey Point DCFS Office

Region 4 – June 29, 2009
Martin Luther Jr. Office

Region 5 – June 30, 2009
Tacoma DSFS Office

Region 6 – April 28, 2009
Centralia DCFS Office

Please contact your Resource Family Training Institute trainer to register, or go to <http://ca.dshs.wa.gov/intranet/> for more information.